

City Briefs

SCHOOL BUSES: "Fantastic" was the word used by Bob Adams, Lafayette's City Manager, to describe the success of the new Lamorinda school bus program. The bus program serves K-8 students in Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda, with 17 buses providing over 1,500 children with safe, cost-effective transportation to and from school. Most of the buses are full, with limited space left on only a handful of the 31 routes. Parents pay \$240 annually per child or an average of 67¢ per trip. Because the school bus program is subsidized by Measure C, the County-wide half-percent sales tax, the program is affordable for most families. However, if you cannot afford the program, Financial Hardship Forms are available at the City of Lafayette offices.

Reducing traffic is the number one goal of the program, and progress will be evaluated

during the first year. Traffic counts and surveys will be conducted to test the buses' effectiveness. Clean fuel buses will arrive early next year to improve air quality, another program goal. Refinements in the routes and designated pick-up and drop-off locations are being made to further streamline the program and make it most useful for Lamorinda students and parents.

For more information on school buses, contact Donna Kaufman, the newly appointed Lamorinda bus program coordinator. Kaufman can be reached at 284-1968.

(City Briefs continued on back page)



DONNA
KAUFMAN

SURVEY REVEALS MODERATE SUPPORT FOR LOCAL TAX

A survey of over 400 Lafayette residents found that local voters would support a limited tax to pay for repair and maintenance of Lafayette's roads and aging storm drain system. The survey, completed last August, indicates that two-thirds of Lafayette's voters are willing to pay between \$42 and \$49 per homeowner per year for delinquent infrastructure repairs and maintenance.

The survey results have been presented to the City Council for its review. The Council plans to work with the volunteer Capital Projects Funding Committee to consider putting forth a tax ballot measure, tentatively slated to go to the voters in the spring of 1995. The council will look at such issues as the dollar amount, project list, and duration of the tax.

Lafayette's minimal road and storm drain repairs are currently paid for by the state gas tax and the local Measure C half-cent sales tax increment. The new proposed tax, which would be the first ever local property tax to fund city services, would supplement the existing funds.

Very little preventative maintenance has been done on Lafayette's roads and storm drains due to limited funds. "We've been forced into a reactive mode when it comes to taking care of infrastructure," says City Manager Bob Adams. "We've got to turn this around so we can minimize costly emergency repairs and do more preventative maintenance."

According to the survey, residents are aware of the need for road repairs and maintenance, but storm drains are apparently more of an "out-of-site, out-of-mind" issue. Unfortunately, storm drains are a major and growing problem. In the past, for instance, the City of Lafayette has been forced to buy two private homes because the city-owned

storm drains that ran under the homes collapsed due to age and decay. The homes started sinking into the ground and had to be destroyed and removed. The city also spent \$250,000 last year on an emergency repair to a collapsed storm drain on Golden Gate Way.

There is also a concern that the failing storm drain at Moraga Road and Mt. Diablo Blvd. could collapse, causing closure of this busy intersection for as long as three months.

The survey, which was conducted by Bradford Senden and Associates, has a margin of error of +/-4% and drew the following major responses from a random group of registered Lafayette voters:

1) Local voters want a city-wide solution to Lafayette's roadway and drainage problems. A majority, 69.6% disagreed with a survey statement that neighborhoods should form their own assessment districts to deal with these problems.

2) When asked to select the type of tax they would like to see passed in Lafayette, 46.9% of the respondents said they would like to see a tax that was the same for all property owners versus a tax that varies based on property value.

3) A small segment of the voting population, 12.2%, said they would never vote for a local tax increase.

4) Many of Lafayette's residents have limited knowledge about how the City is funded. Although Lafayette residents pay property taxes at the same rate as people in all other California municipalities, the City only receives a small fraction of the proceeds—far less than most other cities receive. Lafayette is therefore referred to as a "no property tax" city. A majority, 58.1% of the respondents are aware of Lafayette's unique tax status. However, 42.3% believe incorrectly that the City derives most of its support from local property taxes, while 31% believe the city depends on sales tax. 17% admitted they did not know how Lafayette derives its tax support.

MORE FUNDS NEEDED TO BUILD NEW BALL FIELDS

Construction of two ball fields on Lafayette's undeveloped 68-acre community park site is slated to begin in 1995, but the project still has financial stumbling blocks to overcome. The City has enough funding to get the project started, but not enough to complete it. The bare minimum facilities — two fields, an unimproved, unstriped gravel parking lot, a landscape buffer, an all-weather service road, irrigation and a left-hand turn lane to get people safely off St. Mary's Road — are projected to cost \$650,000. This is \$88,000 more than the City has available to fund the project.

Ideally, the City's Master Plan calls for a more comprehensive facility, including a third ball field, a paved parking lot, a group picnic area, and permanent rest rooms. These items would cost an additional \$1.2 million — far beyond the reach of the City's current resources.

Funding for the first phase of the project comes from Measure AA (\$187,000), a portion of the sale of city-owned property at Pleasant Hill Road and Olympic Blvd. (\$170,000), Parkland Dedication fees (\$120,000), and Measure C (\$35,000). These funds are restricted, having been earmarked for the sole purpose of improving Lafayette's parks and recreation facilities. The Lafayette Little League and the Lamorinda Youth Association have also each pledged \$25,000 to the project. Lafayette's Parks and Recreation Commission is working to establish a foundation to raise additional funds.

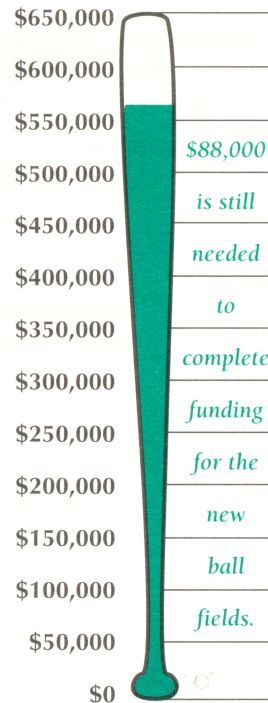
Lafayette's youth sports leagues currently have access to seven school playing fields and two City Little League

fields. Although many of the existing fields are available during off-peak hours, most players need to play and practice at the same time, creating congestion on the fields during the late afternoon, early evening and on weekends. Night games are not an option because local ball fields do not have lights, nor would lights be acceptable to adjacent neighborhoods. The two additional ball fields will allow more youth sports teams to play ball during peak periods.

Construction of the two fields and supporting facilities marks the beginning of Phase 1 of the new Lafayette Community Park in Burton Valley, a project that has been in the planning stages for over five years. Most recently, the Parklands Blue Ribbon Task Force, made up of local volunteers, studied the project and made recommendations on how to best proceed with the creation of a community park.

When completed, the 68 acre Lafayette Community Park will include 3 ball fields, nature trails, creeks, picnic areas, and many other recreational facilities. The park's plan, designed by Dillingham and Associates, balances functionality with aesthetics and is sensitive to Lafayette's love of open space.

If you would like to contribute to the new park fund or if you have any questions, please contact Parks and Recreation Commissioners Carol Singer at 284-7442 or Robert Zenoni at 283-5194, or the Parks and Recreation Department at 284-2232.



ON THE HOUSE

Plan Now For Renovations Later

If you're contemplating making structural improvements to your home this spring, you should begin to think now about securing the necessary permits and approvals through the City of Lafayette's Planning Department and Contra Costa County's Building Inspection Department. Due to low interest rates, the City of Lafayette has been inundated in recent months with permit requests from Lafayette residents making home improvements. This overwhelming number of requests has caused a backlog at the City offices. The message that the City would like to communicate to residents is "plan ahead!"

While some renovations, such as simple room additions, can gain over-the-counter approval in 10 minutes, other seemingly simple additions may trigger unanticipated review and delays. More complicated home improvements, such as second story additions or development on protected ridge lines, can take 60 days or more. Gaining a permit often has as much to do with where you live as what you want to do to your home. The farther up a ridge you live, the more complicated the approval process can be.

The basic approval process is two-fold. The County issues the actual building permit, but the City of Lafayette must first review the proposed renovation to ensure that it complies with local zoning rules. For the most uncomplicated home improvement, residents can plan on one trip to the City offices and one trip to the County offices in Martinez.

"If you're contemplating a home addition or improvement, call the City offices well in advance of your projected construction date. Give us your address and we'll be able to tell you the zoning requirements for your lot," advises Planning Director Niroop Srivatsa. According to Srivatsa, if you go through this simple exercise *before* you actually have your plan on paper, you can save a lot of time and misdirected investment. Srivatsa also warns that zoning rules are updated periodically and what may have applied a year ago may no longer be the case.

For more complicated renovations, such as additions that encroach upon required yard set backs, the homeowner needs a variance. Before a variance is granted, however, the following process must occur: 1) the lot is inspected for such things as minimum yard size and impact to the neighbors; 2) the surrounding neighborhood is notified of the proposed changes; and 3) a hearing is held to render a decision. Depending on the magnitude of the improvement, a homeowner may be required to go before the Planning Commission. Any of these steps may be appealed by an applicant or an affected neighbor, thereby lengthening the process.

If you have questions regarding home improvements, you are encouraged to contact the Planning Department at 284-1976 between 8:30-11:30 am and 1:30-4:30 pm.

MILESTONES

"Milestones" will appear in each issue of *Lafayette Vistas* to provide a schedule of upcoming city issues and an update on past city business.

Nov

FALL CLEAN-UP REMINDER – Don't forget to clean out your house's rain gutters and downspouts before the rainy season! And, if you're in the drain-cleaning frame of mind, please take a few minutes to remove leaves and debris from your gutter and the nearest storm drain inlet. A little prevention now can prevent a lot of flooding later! Call the City's public works department if you have questions, 283-6271.

Nov 18

COMMUNITY THANKSGIVING BREAKFAST

Join members of your community for a breakfast celebrating our good fortunes. 7:30 am, Lafayette United Methodist Church. For information, call the Chamber of Commerce, 284-7404.

Nov 19

COUNTRY-WESTERN CASINO NIGHT

– Don your hat and fasten your spurs for this raucous night of line dancing, food, drinks and prizes. And be sure to bring your checkbook for the silent auction. Proceeds benefit the Lafayette Community Center Foundation. For information and tickets, call 284-2232. 7:00 pm, Lafayette Community Center.

Dec 3, 4

LAFAYETTE WINTER FESTIVAL & BOUTIQUE

Great food, hot mulled cider, arts & crafts, choral groups, and a visit from Santa. 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, Lafayette Community Center.

Dec 4

HOSPICE TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY

– The magnificent oak tree at Lafayette Circle and Mt. Diablo Blvd. will be officially lit for the holidays at 4:00 pm. Reception afterward at the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce.

Dec 17

"A TIME TO BE JOLLY" MARIONETTE SHOW

– A holiday show celebrating the joy of the holiday season. Meet ice skating penguins, dancing snowmen, Rudolph and Santa. \$2/person. 1:00 pm, Lafayette Community Center.

Dec 26-30

HOLIDAY CAMP FOR KIDS

– Holiday arts, crafts, games, songs and special events. 9:00 am to 1:00 pm each day. Call Lafayette Community Center for more information at 284-2232.

Jan 21

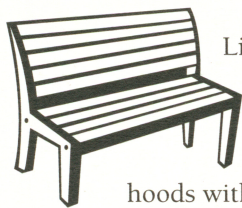
Feb 18

March 18

HOME COMPOSTING FOR BUSY PEOPLE!

Free home composting workshops that explain how to reduce your garbage by one third or more and spend less than 15 minutes a week doing it. You can attend a FREE monthly workshop by calling the Home Composting Hotline at 229-4240 to make reservations. If you can't make a workshop, request the FREE 17-minute videotape entitled "Turning your Spoils to Soil" by calling 229-4240. Workshops will be held at Orchard Nursery.

REDEVELOPMENT: A preliminary draft redevelopment plan for Lafayette's downtown was adopted by the Lafayette City Council on August 22, 1994. With the help of concerned citizens, the Lafayette Homeowners' Council, and the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, the plan went through a series of refinements over a one-year period before it was finally adopted.



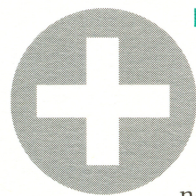
Three key changes that the tentative plan now includes are: 1) Limiting the use of "eminent domain" to public (not private) improvements and projects; 2) Requiring that any eminent domain proceedings must commence within the first 12 years after the plan is adopted; and 3) Narrowing the project area boundaries to exclude all neighborhoods with single-family zoning.

The draft plan also lists the projects that would be funded by redevelopment. Under the most conservative financial scenario, redevelopment proceeds would be targeted at alleviating conditions of blight in the downtown core area. Specifically, the plan could provide up to:

- \$2 million for the purchase of convenient, off-street parking lots;
- \$2 million to promote economic development;
- \$1 million to be used for "under grounding" utilities and installing vintage street lamp fixtures on Mt. Diablo Boulevard;
- \$1 million to construct new and/or rehabilitate existing senior living facilities in Lafayette;
- \$500,000 in incentives to improve commercial storefronts and facades;
- \$500,000 for landscaping street islands and walkways.

These conservative figures are based on the assumption that Lafayette's Redevelopment Agency will collect \$48 million in property taxes from the downtown area during the 40-year life of the plan. In the past, these funds have gone to the County and taxing agencies other than the city of Lafayette. By adopting a redevelopment plan, Lafayette will be able to use these funds to directly benefit the community by improving the downtown area.

VOICE MAIL: To better serve the residents of Lafayette, a voice mail system will be installed at the city offices by year end. A full-time receptionist will continue to answer the phone during business hours. Voice mail will provide residents with the ability to call during or after office hours and leave messages. The voice mail system, which was planned for in the 1994 budget, eliminates the ambiguity that can occur when messages are relayed from one person to another. Now callers will be able to leave detailed, accurate messages directly on the voice mail box of the person they are trying to reach, including the mayor and all council members.



LEAP! Forty more Lafayette neighborhoods now have Emergency Neighborhood Captains, bringing the total number of captains in the City to 160. These volunteers have received instruction, as part of the Lafayette Emergency Action Plan (LEAP), on how to help neighborhoods prepare for earthquakes and other major emergencies. When such emergencies happen, local residents may need to be self-sufficient for up to three days. LEAP coordinators plan to offer additional training in the future, including instruction in first aid, search and rescue, and safety and security. For more information about LEAP, call Peggy Magilen at 284-7179.



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CITY DIRECTORY

Officers

Anne Grodin	Mayor
Gayle B. Uilkema	Vice Mayor
Ivor Samson	Council Member
Donald L. Tatzin	Council Member
Judy Garvens	Council Member

The City Council meets at 6:30 pm on the second and fourth Monday of the month at the Lafayette Community Center, 500 St. Mary's Road.

Staff

Robert F.D. Adams	City Manager
Steven B. Falk	Assist. City Manager
Niroop K. Srivatsa	Planning Director
Mark Lander	City Engineer
Jennifer Russell	Parks and Recreation Director
Ed McNair	Public Works Superintendent
Sue Jusaitis	City Clerk
Gregg Moore	Police Services Mgr.

City Offices and Police

Street Address:	3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Suite 210
Mailing Address:	P.O. Box 1968 Lafayette, CA 94549-1968

City Telephone Numbers

Administration:	284-1968
Engineering:	284-1951
Planning:	284-1976
Parks and Rec:	284-2232
Public Works:	283-6271
Senior Services:	284-5050
Police Business:	284-5010
Police Emergency:	911

LAFAYETTE VISTAS

is published for the residents of Lafayette and reports on issues, people and events that affect our city. As a member of this community, you are encouraged to contact us with your questions and comments. We request all correspondence be sent to:

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